

CURRENT TOPICS

DISPATCHES FROM Victoria, B. C., under date of January 23, say that the steamer Valencia struck a rock five miles from Cape Beale, Monday night, January 22. One hundred and fifty-four people were on board and of this number only twenty were rescued. The commander of the vessel was Captain O. M. Johnson. Those who were rescued say that Captain Johnson made no effort to save his own life, but clinging to the rigging prayed for relief to his passengers. Many urged the captain to place a life belt about his waist, but he persistently refused to do so.

THE SURVIVORS OF THE Valencia wreck have many stirring stories to relate. One of them, J. Willits, who was rescued from a raft, says: "The ship struck at 12:07 on the morning of Tuesday, January 23. I was on deck at the time, smoking a cigar and was looking at my watch when the first crash came. In an instant all was excitement. There were the shrieks of the frightened men and women, the wail of little children and the hoarse orders of the officers of the ship. The vessel reeled like a drunken man, slid over the reef and struck again. The command to back her off was given and she went astern at full speed, but it was too late. The water was pouring in like a mill race and with a sound which drowned all else. The wind swung the vessel's stern to the beach and her head to the waves. This saved many lives as she was then swept back to the shore and struck once again in such a position that she remained partly above the water and on an even keel. Every wave now washed clear over her and many people who hastily rushed on deck went to their deaths without time to murmur a prayer. The order was given to get out the boats. Two of them on the weather side were launched and were smashed like eggshells as soon as they struck the water. Then came the attempt to get out the ice boats. Purser O'Farrell took charge. Four women and a number of men went into the boat. I do not know how many, but she was practically full. Just as they were lowering the other the davits broke and the stern of the boat fell to the water while the bow hung in the air."

EVERY ONE ON THE Valencia was precipitated into the sea and swept away in an instant. Mr. Willits gives this dramatic recital: "For a second or two I caught a glimpse of an agonized face, then another, and yet another, as they were washed by me. It was awful. The waves dashing over the ship started breaking her up. They swept the deck loose and every swell lifted it. We clung to the rigging and deckhouse. Then an attempt was made to get a line ashore. A fireman named Cigales agreed to swim ashore. He was in the water fully half an hour but was unable to make the beach. The ship struck in a bad spot. She was directly at the foot of a precipitous bluff that comes sheer to the water's edge. One man was swept ashore and succeeded in landing on a small rock. We shot a line to him and he then tried to climb the cliff but he fell and was killed before our eyes. One of the most pitiable incidents was that of a little boy about five years old. His father, mother and two little sisters put off in one of the boats. The boat was capsized and all were drowned. The little fellow waded around the deck crying for his parents. The last I saw of him he was clinging to the rigging. There were many similar cases. A lame officer from the Concord, accompanied by his two sisters, was also in the rigging. By Wednesday morning the ship was rapidly going to pieces. Every swell carried away a portion of the ship and the decks rose and fell with every breaker and it was impossible to stay on deck without clinging to a support. The ship was sunk to about the level of the hurricane deck."

IN THE MORNING another calamity occurred which is described by Mr. Willits in this way: "About fifteen or twenty persons, among them one or two women, had taken refuge in the fore-top mast. They appeared to be in the safest place, as it was removed from the wash of the waves, although the flying spray dashed over their heads. Suddenly and without warning the mast tottered and there came a shriek from those on it, and the next moment it fell with a

crash, carrying its load of humanity to a terrible death. I don't think there was a single one saved. Their bodies were washed from the ship and we could see them dashed against the rocks. To add to our misery, the last of our food was washed away. We had no water to drink, save the bitter cold sleet. The wind and rain combined with the sea, soon numbed us. Every little while one of those in the rigging would lose their hold and be swept away to the sharp rocks. When we saw the Queen in the morning we thanked God for saving us, but when she, in company with the tug, sheered off and sailed away, she was followed by nothing but curses. I suppose it was too dangerous for them to attempt to save us. When the Topeka finally hove in sight we determined to make an effort to reach her in the raft lift. Few of the men cared to make the attempt, as it appeared to be certain death to even try to cross the breakers. But eighteen of us were willing and we started. With only a pair of oars the struggle against the wind and sea was almost too much for us. Part of the time we were under water and were almost drowned. But were impelled by desperation and fought and fought against the elements like demons."

THE EXPERIENCE of the passengers on the raft are told by Mr. Willits thus: "We held one man upright in the center of the raft and had him wave a shirt on a pole. When we saw the steamer turn we thought she had overlooked us and was going away. If she had we would have died right there. The waving of the shirt on the raft reminds me that when the Queen was first sighted the women in the rigging even removed portions of their clothing to wave as a signal for help from their positions in the rigging. When we left the ship on the raft we tried to get some of the remaining women to go, but they refused. No help can now reach them before morning and the ship will have then gone to pieces. She was breaking up when we left her. She could not possibly have held together more than a few hours afterward. She lies directly in such a position that there is no hope of any one reaching shore. If the two boats which we saw get away and put to sea are picked up, they and ours will be the only ones saved. Captain Johnson lost his bearings and ran the ship ashore. It was a dark and stormy night and nothing could be seen. The ship struck while running full speed. We all thought we were to the southward of Flattery, and after striking Captain Johnson proved himself a hero. He made the statement that he would never leave the wreck alive, and I believe it. The chief engineer is also carrying a revolver with which to blow out his brains when the critical moment comes. There were many deeds of heroism and many acts of cowardice, but on the whole the people behaved well and met their fate like men."

THE NEBRASKA PRESS association will meet in Thirty-fourth annual convention at Lincoln, on February 27 and 28. The Nebraska association is one of the oldest in the country and the annual meetings are always interesting and instructive to its members. This year an unusually good program has been arranged, the topics being such as will interest all members. "The railroad advertising question" will be discussed in all its phases, and the discussion will be opened by J. C. Seacrest, business manager of the Nebraska Daily State Journal, who will speak from the business office standpoint, and R. L. Metcalfe, associate editor of The Commoner, who will speak from the editorial office view. Hon. "Lafe" Young, editor of the Des Moines Daily Capital, will deliver an address on "Newspapers of the Orient," and John T. McCutcheon, the famous cartoonist, will deliver an illustrated lecture.

M. CLEMENT ARMAND FALLIERES, president of the French senate, has been elected president of France by the national assembly sitting at Versailles. He received 449 votes, which was four more than were necessary to elect, his closest opponent, Doumer, president of the chamber of deputies, receiving 371. The following is from the Literary Digest: "Although several other candidates were mentioned for the presidency in succession to M. Loubet," says the correspondent of the New York Post, "M. Sarrien,

former minister of justice; and M. Leon Bourgeois, the former premier, the real contest law between M. Fallieres and Doumer. The former had the general support of the advanced socialist and radical groups, constituting the famous party which sustained the Combes ministry." "There is a great deal of similarity between the new and the retiring presidents of the French republic," says the New York Times. "Like M. Loubet, M. Fallieres is, before everything else, a man of the people. His grandfather was a blacksmith and his father a magistrate's clerk. Like M. Loubet, he is a man of absolute integrity, trusted even by his bitterest opponents and esteemed by all. He is a finer orator than M. Loubet, but his simplicity of character is similar to that of the present president, and he possesses the same innate politeness and capacity for suiting himself to his circumstances. In politics he is regarded as eminently 'safe,' considering every point thoroughly before deciding on any action, and possessing the happy faculty of intuitively knowing the trend of opinion of the majority of his countrymen."

LOUIS H. TURRILL at Detroit, Michigan, a former accountant of the Standard Oil company at St. Joseph, Mo., testifying before a commissioner at Cleveland, Ohio, January 25, said that he was asked to become a director in a new oil company which afterwards proved to be "The Republic Oil Company." He said he was induced to sign articles of incorporation as F. E. Turrill instead of Louis H. Turrill, and was told to say nothing about being a Standard Oil employee. Turrill says he subscribed for three hundred shares of stock for which he did not pay a cent. He was made secretary and treasurer, and a director of the company, and was given charge of the accounting system in the Cleveland field. The directors of the Republic Oil company hold meetings at the Standard Oil company's offices in New York and whatever they did was done upon the suggestion and order of H. M. Tilford, one of the executive holders of the Standard Oil company. Turrill said that his communications were directed to No. 75 New street, New York, which was the rear entrance of the Standard Oil building at No. 26 Broadway. He said he was instructed to maintain the impression that the Republic Oil company was independent and to deny that it was controlled by the Standard. Frank Rockefeller was summoned to testify, but at his earnest request was excused from going on the stand. Service has not yet been secured on John D. Rockefeller.

THE AMERICAN CITIZENS on the Isle of Pines have organized a literary bureau and seem determined to resist Cuban authority. Secretary of State Root has declared that the Isle of Pines is legally under the dominion and government of the Republic of Cuba, and the Americans on that island are obliged to obey Cuban laws. The Isle of Pines Americans, however, say that Mr. McKinley formally declared that the Isle of Pines belong to the United States and caused an official statement to be made by the war department that the island was American territory and that the public lands therein were subject to the disposal of congress. Appeals to congress have been made by those who protest against Cuban authority to retain the Isle of Pines within the American system.

IT IS BEGINNING to dawn on some of Mr. Roosevelt's friends that when he made his tie-up in New York politics against former Governor Odell he assumed altogether too great a responsibility. Lined with Mr. Roosevelt and Governor Higgins in the fight against Odell were the insurance magnates who have recently been under investigation, as well as Senator Platt. Governor Higgins has already protested against legislative investigation of the state insurance bureau, and a New York dispatch to the Houston (Texas) Post throws further light on the situation. This dispatch follows: "Some significance is believed to attach to recent editorials in the Albany Journal, which is owned by William Barnes, Jr. These editorials are upon the subject of insurance legislation. The editorials are very cautiously written and yet they appear to urge a let-up in the matter of legislation. The editorials hold that it is the business of the insurance superin-